

lak@merit.edu

TechMail

19/16 added 4 @ hard copy @ add to bib
Dec'd 10-26
Fri, 16 Oct 92

Re: Link Letter

Barbara Lincoln Brooks, Page 1
② added to bib 10-26

Return-Path: <lak@merit.edu>
Date: Fri, 16 Oct 92 14:02:18 -0400
To: barbara@quake.think.com (Barbara Lincoln Brooks)
From: lak@merit.edu
Subject: Re: Link Letter
Cc: nsfnet-info@merit.edu

>
>I wrote a month ago, regarding a copy of the September/October issue of
>Link Letter.
>
>In the article, "Information - the commodity of the future", it says
>"see the March/April 1992 issue of the Link Letter for more details on
>WAIS".
>
>As I work with Brewster Kahle on the WAIS project, we would like to get
>a copy of that March/April 92 issue.
>
>Did anyone get my last message? Please let me know if this is a
>problem, or you have any questions.
>
>My address is:
>Barbara Brooks
>Thinking Machines Corp
>1010 El Camino, Suite 310
>Menlo Park, CA 94025
>
>Thanks,
>barbara

Barbara,
Sorry for the delay. I'm not sure if your message was lost or
if we dropped the ball here. Please, accept our apologies.
I am enclosing the 2 articles from the March/April Link Letter that
discuss WAIS.

The Link Letters are also available via anonymous ftp to nic.merit.edu
and via our WAIS server.

Please, let us know if we can be of any further assistance.
Oh, and tell Brewster that I said "HI"!

--Laura Kelleher
Merit/NSFNET Informatio Services

<NIC.MERIT.EDU> /nsfnet/linkletter/linkletter.9203-04

Vol. 5 No. 1

March/April 1992

L I N K L E T T E R

The Merit/NSFNET Backbone Project

WAIS -- MAKING IT EASIER TO ACCESS INTERNET RESOURCES

(Reprinted from CERFnet News, Volume 3 Number 6. Used with permission.)

The Wide Area Information Servers (WAIS) system is a set of products
supplied by different vendors to help end-users find and retrieve

information over networks. Using WAIS (pronounced ways) the user isn't required to become familiar with several different systems. Also, since the interface consolidates data from many sources, the data can be manipulated effortlessly, virtually without regard to their origins.

Thinking Machines, Apple Computer, and Dow Jones initially implemented such a system for use by business executives. These products are becoming more widely available from various companies.

What does WAIS do?

Users on different platforms can access personal, company, and published information from one interface. The information can be anything: text, pictures, voice, or formatted documents. Since a single computer-to-computer protocol is used, information can be stored anywhere on different types of machines. Anyone can use this system since it uses natural language questions to find relevant documents. Relevant documents can be fed back to a server to refine the search. This avoids complicated query languages and vendor specific systems. Successful searches can be automatically run to alert the user when new information becomes available.

How does WAIS work?

The servers take a user's question and do their best to find relevant documents. The servers, at this point, do not understand the user's English language question, rather they try to find documents that contain those words and phrases and ranks them based on heuristics. The user interfaces (clients) talk to the servers using an extension to a standard protocol Z39.50. Using a public standard allows vendors to compete with each other, while bypassing the usual proprietary protocol period that slows development. Thinking Machines is giving away an implementation of this standard to help vendors develop clients and servers.

Where do WAIS servers exist?

Even though the system is very new, there are already several servers:

- Dow Jones is putting a server on their own DowVision network. This server contains the Wall Street Journal, Barons, and 450 magazines. This is a for-pay server.
- Thinking Machines operates a Connection Machine on the Internet for free use. The databases it supports are some patents, a collection of molecular biology abstracts, a cookbook, and the CIA World Factbook.
- MIT supports a poetry server with a great deal of classical and modern poetry.
- Cosmic is serving descriptions of government software packages.
- The Library of Congress has plans to make their catalog available on the protocol.
- Weather maps and forecasts are made available by Thinking Machines as a repackaging of existing information.
- The "directory of servers" facility is operated by Thinking Machines so that new servers can be easily registered as either for-pay or for-free servers and users can find out about these services.

For more information

Contact Brewster Kahle for more information on the WAIS project, the Connection Machine WAIS system, or the free Mac, Unix Server, and X Window System interfaces. There is a mailing list that has weekly postings on progress and new releases; to subscribe send e-mail to: wais-discussion-request@think.com.

You can also retrieve a copy of the WAIS Bibliography by Barbara Lincoln, Thinking Machines, October, 1991. It is available via anonymous FTP from quake.think.com. The directory/file is: /pub/wais/wais-discussion/bibliography.txt It is also available via the WAIS server wais-discussion-archive.src.

Brewster Kahle is the Project Leader for Wide Area Information Servers. Kahle's Internet-mail address is brewster@think.com.

- Brewster Kahle

WAIS-MAC INTERFACE PROPOSED

The latest and greatest from the world of WAIS was demonstrated for attendees at a WAIS seminar held at the MCNC Center for Communications in Research Triangle Park, NC on February 3 and 4.

Participants viewed a number of demonstrations of WAIS software on several platforms and were treated to a sneak preview of an Apple development project to create a new Macintosh-WAIS interface. The prototype of this interface combines graphics and text to present information in a newspaper-like "front page" format.

Speakers at the seminar included meeting organizer George Brett of MCNC, Cliff Lynch of the University of California, Brewster Kahle of Thinking Machines, and Jim Fullton of University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

Further information about WAIS may be obtained by contacting George Brett, ghb@concert.net.

- Mark Davis-Craig, Merit/MichNet

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Return-Path: <barbara>
Date: Thu, 17 Sep 92 11:18:35
From: barbara (Barbara Lincoln)
To: nsfnet-info@merit.edu
Subject: Link Letter
Cc: barbara

Hi. I work on the WAIS project at Thinking Machines with Brewster Kahle. Brewster just received a copy of the September/October issue of the Link Letter.

In the article, "Information - the commodity of the future", it says "see the March/April 1992 issue of the Link Letter for more deails on WAIS".

I was wondering if I could get a copy of the March/April issue.

My address is:
Barbara Brooks
Thinking Machines
1010 El Camino Suite 310
Menlo Park, CA 94025
(barbara@think.com)

I would greatly appreciate this! Please let me know if you have any problems, or questions regarding this request.

thanks,
barbara

10/16 asked again